

ESCAPE FROM EXISTENCE:
Reflection of Existential
Philosophy in
Edward Albee's Selected Plays

Firuze Güzel

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PREFACE

The questions about our existence reveal themselves in every segment of art, literature, and philosophy. The main current of philosophical thought, however, is surely existentialism, which was widely in trend after WWII. Pioneered by Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche in the 19th century, the philosophical current was the primary focus of several philosophers such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Karl Jaspers, and Albert Camus. These philosophers have questioned the existence of human beings, the meaninglessness of life, existence and essence, freedom of human beings and free will, reality, communication, the effects of language, problems resulting from not understanding oneself and life, loneliness, alienation, and death. While these questionings can be seen in numerous literary works in every genre, theatre grasps attention with respect to its structure, particularly The Theatre of the Absurd with its genuine interest in the human condition. The Theatre of the Absurd is a term coined by Martin Esslin in 1960 and Samuel Beckett, Eugene Ionesco, Jean Genet, Harold Pinter, and Luigi Pirandello can be listed as the forerunners of the European absurd theatre. When this style is examined in the US, Edward Albee becomes the most prominent representative. It is obvious that Albee was influenced by existential philosophy and mentioned playwrights. For that regard, this book aims to make analyses

of Edward Albee's selected plays, "The Zoo Story", "Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?", "A Delicate Balance", "The Lady from Dubuque", and "The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?" within the framework of existentialist philosophy. For that aim, firstly the ideas of the most established existential philosophers, and then the Theatre of The Absurd, the tradition in which Albee is included, are examined. In the last section, the expression of existential concepts such as alienation, search for meaning, freedom, choice, responsibility, authenticity, and their relationship with cultural themes are discussed as well as how the characterization, setting, and language contribute to these existential and cultural themes.

*

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While I was writing my master's thesis, which is now published as this book, my grandfather Sami Şahap Gürkan was still among us, and I would to thank him now for his encouragement one last time. My mother, my father, and my brother have always been alongside me since those days with their unconditional support and for that, I am always grateful to them.

I would like to thank my husband, Sinan Güzel, who has been an adamant ally, and I am always indebted to him for his

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Firuze GÜZEL

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